

25 February 2008: Morning Routine and Reading

I have discovered that I am stiff and useless unless I do yoga in the morning. I need to come up with a good, short routine that I can do in 15-20 minutes to warm up and stretch all my muscles. Then I can function around the students!

I ran morning meeting today. I was apprehensive, yet I jumped in and did it properly. The students still don't greet each other in completely audible voices, but the routine was smooth and the students didn't question my stepping in for something my cooperating teacher typically orchestrates.

As students read the morning message, I realized that I balk at calling students by name. I know their names, but I hesitate to use them in case I mess up. So many of them have similar names (and we have a Kevin B and Kevin C), I sometimes get confused. I relaxed as the children were reading information for the day and was sure to thank each child who read by name, not messing up on a single one.

I sat through morning message and anticipated students would have a question about the word "stellar" that my cooperating teacher used to describe how she hoped everyone's winter breaks went. I was ready with, "Who knows what stellar means?" when my cooperating teacher jumped in with the question. I was ready to help with root word recognition talking about "stella" when the SETTS teacher, stepped in. Wow! I was proud of my little mind for predicting the next thoughts of the two educators in the room.

The thing that is getting to me the most in the classroom is the superfluous amount of photocopies the children are given. Where is the instruction? Where are the lesson plans? What use are worksheets when students don't understand the underlying concepts of the task at hand? There seems to be a philosophy of, "let them try it. When they don't get it, that's when you step in and help." So many of the kids, however, don't get it. Others give up when seeing the worksheet itself and busy themselves with a book or other activity, knowing they'll get the answers from a classmate later. Eventually, a brave soul sits in front of my cooperating teacher to ask a question. Slowly but surely, about half the class trickles onto the carpet to join in on the session. Are these students all ready for self-selective instructional time?

Also, this is an environmentally-based school. Why so many copies? Some of these students don't need near as much space to show their work in that the worksheets give. Some students need much more. Why not save paper and keep continuity by having students copy the questions in their notebooks? Many of the students need writing help, anyway. Copying questions is a skill they need to develop, as is improving their handwriting. This method will save trees, build valuable skills, and keep their assignments and problems in one, neat, sequential book they can refer to. It just takes some planning and board strategizing.

Several students in the class are reading way below their level. The slowest reader in the class, who is also diagnosed with several learning disabilities and has the most difficult time reading and comprehending of all the students is reading at a 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade level. Two other

students have chosen to read books like Cat in the Hat! Are they reading for comfort? Do they need help choosing a book? Or are they really struggling but haven't been identified by their teacher?